

Localism in radio and television broadcasting is extremely important to all communities. It aids in educating people about what is going on in their neighborhoods, from breaking news to upcoming events. Not only is localism effective in dispersing information, it is also a way to bring people together, giving them a real sense of belonging as a community should have.

Some radio and TV stations understand the strength of market forces in their communities and therefore make sure to broadcast community responsive programs in order to satisfy the public and keep viewers and listeners coming back to—and hopefully becoming loyal to—their stations. Unfortunately, the strength of market forces is not realized by all broadcasters. Because of the huge importance of localism in programming, there should be regulations authorizing both radio and TV stations to air local programming throughout the day. For TV, this could mean airing a minimum of thirty minutes of local programming every three hours, such as a high school sport activity, local news, various PSA's, local events, etc. For radio, this could include interviews of local musicians, various PSA's, music of local artists, or even local listeners participating in a station's game or contest. This would greatly improve the amount of local programs aired on TV and radio while allowing the stations to build a stronger relationship with the community.

In order to keep localism as a top priority of TV and radio stations, certain practices must be brought to an end. Payola-type practices cause stations to satisfy their financial needs rather than their listeners' needs. In radio, by accepting money in return for playing music recommended by promoters, stations are giving up their airtime to music that a promoter wants to be played rather than what a listener wants to hear. Granted, the majority of the songs that are "paid for" are of interest to listeners, but it keeps listeners from having a say in what they would like to hear when stations can actually make money by ignoring their listeners' requests. Not only are listeners' requests possibly set on the back burner, but many songs that listeners would like to hear are not aired either because the record label did not pay a promoter to recommend their music, or because the artist did not participate in a concert sponsored by the station. It would be beneficial to simplify the process for filing complaints so that citizens can further voice their opinions on this issue and make a difference in what their stations air. The FCC should absolutely have more power to act on these complaints in order to insure equal opportunity for all artists to have their songs played without having to pay a fee.

In TV, stations are said to have aired interviews with guests who have paid the station to have them on their programs. How does the station know that these guests are who their viewers want to see? The problem is, they don't know, and frankly, I don't think they care. To keep viewers informed about why they're seeing what they're watching, the FCC should absolutely extend their sponsorship identification rules for political ads to all paid programming. By prominently displaying the name of the sponsor of the program, viewers are no longer deceived by these practices.

On the issue of voice-tracking, I don't think that it affects localism negatively as long as it is not overused and it does not completely take the place of a local DJ. It is important to have a real local DJ for all radio stations to connect with the

community. A local country station in the city I grew up in had a DJ named "Big Joe Lombardi" who would take requests from us as listeners and who would show up at our high school football games as the commentator. He even was the DJ for a local Vanilla Ice concert we had (where a LOCAL band was the opening guest for the artist.) This proved that our town had a real sense of community with even our local radio station, allowing us to feel connected to the station in some way.

As for the localism concern of national playlists, it is important that these playlists are restricted by the FCC in some sense, perhaps to a minimum number of hours per day of which they can be aired. The FCC should require stations to keep slots in their programming each day specifically for airing local artist's music or interviews.

With more focus on localism due to new rules and regulations by the FCC, broadcasters will better satisfy the public, resulting in more loyalty to their stations by listeners and viewers. When the public is promised certain programming to satisfy their preferences, this will in turn make the station more money from advertising because of the large viewing audiences, making up for the loss in payments the station would otherwise receive from unfair practices such as payola.